

Building Castle Byers by IloveSasukeShinoNeji

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Summary: "Do you remember the day Dad left? We stayed up all night building Castle Byers..." Jonathan helps Will build Castle Byers the day their dad skips town, but the two of them end up getting sick in the rain. Luckily, Joyce is there for her boys and knows her boys will always be there for her and each other. Byers family love :)

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11/01/17

Even though he was only eleven years-old, Will knew his father was never coming back. Lonnie had finished shoving suitcases into the trunk of his car and pulled out of their driveway. Joyce screamed as he drove off. Will turned away from the window and laid down on his bed.

An hour passed and Will had pulled out his crayons. He'd begun to draw something, anything to get his mind off all this. It was therapeutic for him. He didn't want to think, he just wanted to draw. To create. Somewhere safe, a place for him to go and have all these thoughts.

Lost in his drawing, he barely heard the knock on his door.

"Will? ...Can I come in?" Jonathan turned the door knob, "Hey, buddy..." He creaked open the door and poked his head inside.

Will continued to draw without saying a word.

"Listen... I know things seem tough right now..." Jonathan walked over to Will, who was still too focused on his work to look up, "...but it's going to be okay." Jonathan sat down next to Will and put a hand on him for comfort.

Will continued to draw in silence as Jonathan glanced over at his work. "Will, that's incredible! That's..." Jonathan cut himself off. Tears dripped onto the page. Will quietly sobbed, but kept drawing as if it were nothing. "Will..." Jonathan whispered under his breath.

"I... I don't..." Will finally spoke, "...I don't even know how to feel. I'm sad and I'm mad, but worst of all, I feel somewhat relieved. I know I shouldn't feel that way, but he... he..." Jonathan pulled Will into a big hug. Will burst into tears, holding nothing back.

"I know... I know, buddy," Jonathan rocked Will back and forth and

he began to feel comforted. Jonathan looked over at Will's drawing. An idea popped into his head.

"Hey, why don't we build this fort of yours, huh?" Jonathan picked up the drawing Will had been making "It can be a place just for you. A place where you can go and do whatever you want."

Will stopped crying and looked at Jonathan. He sniffed and rubbed his nose on his sleeve. "You mean it?" His face lit up a little.

"Of course I do." Jonathan stood up. "We'll have to hammer it together ourselves though."

"I'm not good at hammering or building..." Will looked disheartened.

"Hey, I'm not good at drawing, but look what you can do." Jonathan held up the drawing. "Don't give up and don't ever doubt what you can do." Will smiled a little. "There you go. Now come on, the suns starting to set." Will stood up and the two of them headed to the shed to get started.

Later outside, Will and Jonathan had gathered tools, wood, nails, tarps, blankets, pillows, and all kind of toys from Will's room. They began to nail the pieces of wood together.

"Oww!" Will yelped. He had missed the head on the nail again, "Why is hammering so hard. I told you I suck at this."

"Hey now, you don't suck. You just need a little practice is all." Jonathan helped him steady the hammer and Will banged it down into the wood. "See! You just gotta keep at it. Don't give up."

Will gave a weak smile and picked up another piece to nail down when suddenly thunder roared above them.

"Shoot." Jonathan looked up and felt spurts of rain hit his face. "We better hurry up, before it starts to pour." The brothers picked up the pace.

As the storm raged on, both boys were visibly exhausted, Will especially.

Will sniffled and coughed as he pushed wet hair out of his face. Jonathan looked over at him with concern. "Will, I think we should finish this tomorrow, buddy..."

"No..." Will was still trying to hit the nail with little success, when he suddenly broke out into coughing fit.

"Look at you. You're getting sick." Jonathan dropped his stuff and kneeled down next to his brother.

"No!" Will yelled as he missed the nail again, "We can't..." Will fought back tears, "We can't give up. Because then... then we're no different than him...!"

Will swung and hit the nail this time. "We can't... give up." Will looked at Jonathan.

Jonathan looked Will straight in the face, tears welling up in his eye now too. He nodded at Will and picked up the next piece, hammering it together.

The storm had passed and the sun was rising. A cold morning fog rolled through the yard. The boys had fallen asleep inside the now finished "Castle Byers." They were curled up in piles of unorganized pillows and blankets.

"Will...? Jonathan...?" Joyce was screaming in the distance, "Will?! Jonathan?!" Her voice got louder, pulling Jonathan out of his sleep. He looked around and remembered. He and Will had stayed out all night finishing the fort. He looked down at his little brother, still sound asleep and smiled.

"We did it, buddy..." Jonathan pushed hair out his Will's face, "We didn't give up."

Joyce burst open the tarp door and fell to her knees. "Oh my god. You boys scared me half to death!" She let out and exasperated gasp. "Don't ever do that again."

"Mom, we're fine. We just fell asleep." Jonathan shifted himself up rousing Will out of his sleep.

"Mom...? Jonathan...?" Will rubbed his eyes trying to focus on what was in front of him. "What's going on?" His voice was hoarse as he let out a deep wet cough.

Joyce heard the raspiness in Will's voice and noticed how pale he was. She placed a hand on his forehead and cheek. "Oh sweetie, you feel hot." She rubbed his arms feeling the dampness from the rain on his sleeves. "And you're soaking wet too." She gave them both deeply frustrated looks. "Were you boys out here all night in the freezing rain?"

"I'm okay, mom." Will shivered. "Just a little headache..." Joyce grabbed one of the big blankets and wrapped it around his shoulders.

Jonathan felt awful now. He didn't mean to get his brother sick.

"Okay, we're staying home today." Joyce said as she helped Will up. "Jonathan, can you help?"

Jonathan picked up Will and put him on his back. "Come on, bud. Let's get you into some warm clothes and a bed."

All of those things sounded wonderful to Will. He wrapped his arms around Jonathan's neck and buried his head in his back as they walked back to the house.

After a warm bath and some clean clothes, Joyce tucked Will in. She pulled a thermometer from his mouth and read off the numbers...

"101..." She handed him a cap full of sleepy-time cold syrup. "This should bring your fever down, sweetie."

Will accepted the medicine without protest and drank it down. "Thanks." He handed back the empty cap and yawned. Exhaustion overtook his swimming head.

"Try and rest, okay?" Joyce pulled the covers over Will's shoulders. He sunk into his bed and drifted off.

"Thanks, mom...love.. you. Will yawned again.

"Love you too, sweetheart." Joyce felt a bang in her heart as she

pushed hair out of his face.

Will fell into a deep sleep as Joyce drew all the curtain in the room. She then closed the door behind her and headed to the kitchen.

Jonathan was spacing out making coffee. The cold had made his clothes stick to his body and his head felt somewhat fuzzy. A chill run down his spine making him shiver.

Joyce sat down at the kitchen table and lit up a cigarette. Jonathan handed her a cup of coffee.

"How is he?" He asked. Guilt could be heard in his voice as he took the seat next to her.

"The medicine should help him sleep for now, but he's still got a fever." Joyce looked at her eldest and sensed his guilt. "Hey... I'm not mad. I know this isn't your fault. Yesterday... was a bad day, for all of us."

Jonathan just stared blankly into his coffee.

"You know, what I'm most proud of when it comes to you two...?"

He looked up at his mom's face.

"Nothing makes me prouder than having my two boys be best friends. You would do anything for each other. Even stay out all night in the pouring rain building a fort..."

"He calls it Castle Byers." Jonathan pulled the crumpled drawing from his pocket, "He drew it himself."

"Oh wow." Joyce said as she looked over the drawing. "It looks just like the fort." She laugh cried as she took another drag of her cigarette.

"He wanted a place all of his own. A place to think and get away from it all... A place where friends are welcome and don't have to feel alone." Jonathan cried and Joyce pulled him into a hug.

"Hey... hey... I know honey, I know." She placed a hand on the back

of his head and brushed his hair down. "Hey..." Joyce pulled back and placed her hand on Jonathan's forehead. "Oh sweetie, you too?"

"I'm fine..." Jonathan sniffed, but he felt dizzy and light headed. "I just need to lay down for a minute." Jonathan began to fumble towards the couch.

"Oh no you don't, you're getting changed out of your wet clothes and going straight to bed." Joyce pulled him back around and marched him to the bathroom. "I'll get you pajamas."

Jonathan didn't have the energy to fight back, and obeyed his mother's orders. He stepped into the shower and let the hot water rush over him. He could feel his head start to clear up.

After performing a similar routine with Jonathan, Joyce tucked her eldest son into bed and took his temperature. She brushed his hair back as they waited for the thermometer to read.

"Mom, stop. This is embarrassing. I'm not a little kid. I'm 15." Jonathan pouted. Will may not care, but Jonathan felt too old for his mother's coddling.

"There's no one even here for you to feel embarrassed. And the more you complain, the longer this will take." Joyce hushed as she watched her stop watch time out the reading. Her watch beeped and she removed the glass stick from his mouth. "101.2... well, you just barely beat your brother."

"Great..." Jonathan groaned and placed his hands on his aching head. Joyce handed him the same syrup she gave Will.

"Mom, that's for kids..." Jonathan moaned.

"It says ages 6-15. So yes, it's for kids." Joyce smirked as she handed him. "Ever since you were small, you've always fought me on taking care of you... Can't you let me just this once?"

"Okay, okay. Fine... I give up. My head hurts so I'll take it." Jonathan took the cap of medicine and drank it down. He instantly felt it's effects and began to drift off.

"Thank you." Joyce took it from him placed it aside, "Now, no more working yourself up." She kissed Jonathan's forehead and stroked his hair back. "Just close your eyes and let yourself sleep."

Jonathan's eye fluttered closed and in an instant he was out.

Joyce squeezed his hand and drew the curtains "Goodnight, my baby." Joyce whispered "Thanks for being there for him. I know you always will be."

She closed the door behind her and smiled.

Despite all that had happened, she knew everything was going to be alright.

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